

powers than itself, and earlier exercised, becomes humbly obsequious to them. The passions easily beguile this majestic reason, or judgment, into neglect, or bribe it into acquiescence, or repress it into silence, while *they* receive the impressions, and while *they* acquire from those impressions, that determinate direction, which will constitute the character. If, after thus much is done during the weakness, or without the notice, or without the leave, or under the connivance or corruption of the judgment, it be called upon to perform its part in estimating the quality and actual effect of the modifying influences, it has to perform this judicial work with just that degree of rectitude which it can have acquired and maintained under the operation of those very influences. In acting the judge, it is itself in subjection to the effect of those impressions of which its office was, to have previously decided whether they should not be strenuously repelled. Thus its opinions will unconsciously be perverted; like the answers of the ancient oracles, dictated for the, imaginary god by beings of a very terrestrial sort, though the sly intervention could not be perceived. It is quite a vulgar observation, how pleased a man may be with the formation of his own character, though *you* smile at the gravity of his persuasion, that his tastes, preferences, and qualities, have on the whole grown up under the sacred and faithful guardianship of judgment, while, in fact, his judgment has accepted every bribe that has been offered to betray him.

#### LETTER IV,

You will agree with me, that in a comprehensive view of the influences which have formed, and are forming, the characters of men, we shall find, religion excepted, but little cause to felicitate our species. Make the supposition that any assortment of persons, of sufficient number to comprise the most remarkable distinctions of character, should write memoirs of themselves, so exactly and honestly telling the story, and exhibiting so clearly the most effective circumstances, as to explain, to your discernment at least, if not to their own consciousness, the main process by which their minds have attained their present state. If they were to read these memoirs